constant, but fails to take place in certain constitutions or at certain seasons of the year. Generally, however, they are said to operate in half an hour, or less, from the time of their application. They are stated to possess the advantage over blisters made by flies, that they never occasion symptoms of strangury.

With a view to their external stimulus they have been used advantageously in rheumatism, the hip disease, hemicrania, and fixed pains of various descriptions. Among the old practitioners, who have recorded instances of their effects, are Baglivi, Storck, and Sennertius. A curious practice, at one time, prevailed in several countries in Europe, of applying the Ranunculus to the wrists or fingers, for the cure of intermittent fever. This is mentioned by Van Swieten, Tissot, and some others. In hemicrania it was applied to the head, and in this case it did not produce a discharge, nor break the skin; but occasioned tumefaction of the hairy scalp.

An objection against the use of the Ranunculi, as external stimulants, exists in the uncertainty of their operation, and the violent effects which sometimes have followed after they had been applied. Those writers, who have witnessed their application, record instances in which these vege-

table blisters have been followed by deep, ill-conditioned and sloughing ulcers, which were not healed without great difficulty. Tissot mentions an instance, in which an application made to the thumb caused a deep, painful ulcer, which penetrated to the bone, and occupied some months in its cure. In another case the blister spread, in a few hours, over the whole arm, occasioning fever and delirium, and was followed by such a tendency to gangrene, that the limb was with difficulty saved. Chesnau, quoted by Murray, advises that the Ranunculus should be applied to a small surface only, and through a perforation in an adhesive plaister, to prevent it from spreading. From want of this caution, he had known extensive inflammation to arise and spread over a greater part of the face, neck, and breast.—Linnæus, in his Flora Suecica, relates that beggars, in Sweden, were known to excite ulcerations of their feet with the Ranunculus sceleratus, to assist them in extorting charity from passengers.

I know not to what extent the efficacy of the Ranunculi, externally applied, can be depended on. Certain it is that they do not affect all persons alike, and this fact is avowed by those who have used them most. I have repeatedly made applications of the contused roots and

JACOB BIGELOW *American Medical Botany* BOSTON, 1817-1820 CARY GRAPHIC ARTS COLLECTION, ROCHESTER INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY Octavo